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## Minister's one-woman show, '...from Eggbeaters to Vibrators' Victim of abuse a Pied Piper for 'erotic empowerment'

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by Len Lear

The Rev. Beverly Dale is the last person you'd expect to lead a revolution for female sexual liberation. But the Mt. Airy resident and Christian cleric who was an ecumenical campus minister for 21 years at the University of Pennsylvania, where she was called by one faculty member "the conscience of the university," is just that.



To say that "Rev. Bev" is progressive in her approach to issues of sexuality would be an understatement.

Rev. Dale, 52, who came to Philadelphia from her native Illinois in 1989 for the job at Penn, has made several YouTube videos with the focus that "Sex is good." Prior to coming here, she was a pastor in a Christian church (Disciples of Christ) parish in Illinois for six years. She has also been an outspoken advocate for sexual minority communities. "I am standing on the backs of other female and gay theologians," she said.

She is the playwright, director and performer of a one-woman show, usually for secular audiences, called “An Irreverent Journey from Eggbeaters to Vibrators” that received funding support from the Leeway Foundation. A published author of both articles and poetry on sexuality and faith, she has received funding from Leeway to write several songs that address these topics as well.

Rev. Dale, who has two children and two grandchildren and who was ordained by the Chicago Theological Seminary in 1985, has initiated dozens of performances, workshops and presentations on sexuality over the last decade, often stressing “women’s erotic empowerment.” On Thursday, Oct. 25, at 7 p.m., she will lead a discussion/presentation on sexual empowerment at The Center on the Hill in the Chestnut Hill Presbyterian Church, 8855 Germantown Ave.

“My work with sexual and spiritual empowerment is my life story,” Rev. Dale (known as “Rev. Bev” at Penn) said in an interview last week. “How does one become empowered when we’ve been told that sex is bad?”

“I was sexually abused by an uncle when I was a child, and that stimulated my interest in this subject. He (the abuser) was a deacon in the church, but he would not apologize. I don’t fault him as much as I do the church and society. I had to ask myself if God justifies the abuse of little girls. And is sex something to be ashamed of? That’s what a great many people think.

“There is still a great deal of sexual repression, and I can tell you from my days at Penn that the sexual double standard is alive and well on college campuses, as is the objectification of women. The ‘hookup’ culture gets around the issue.”

Rev. Dale, who has lived in Mt. Airy for 12 years and “loves it,” was not so assertive about her opinions while she was at Penn because “I did not want to catch the attention of the right-wingers who are very anti-women and anti-sex.” She left the Ivy League campus, where she was general minister and president of the school’s Christian Association, in 2010 at least in part so she could pursue her mission of spreading the “Good News,” so to speak, about human sexuality.

“The church usually takes the position that sex is moral only if the people engaging in it are married,” she said, “and that is very unhelpful. The mainstream church clergy may be more progressive than many years ago, but we still don’t hear positive sermons about the body. The ministers have not been trained. Part of my mission is to add this issue (sexual empowerment) to the curriculum in seminaries. And that one can be moral and sexual at the same time, even outside of marriage.”

The controversial best-seller, “50 Shades of Gray,” which explores non-traditional sexual activities such as bondage and discipline, has both good and bad elements, according to the local cleric. “It’s good to step outside of vanilla and to give women permission to move outside of the ‘good little girl’ syndrome, but there is also misinformation in the book.”

Last week Rev. Dale released a video titled “Non-Marital Sex,” which promotes the view that sex outside of marriage need not be viewed as bad or immoral.

“Unfortunately,” she explained, “too many people don’t realize that marriage is a social custom, not biology, and sexuality is simply biology that could use some moral grounding that is not sexually repressive.

“I believe we can be moral and ethical in our sex lives as single people. Most people, however, never think that through carefully. Using marriage to have sex is probably not the best way to have a relationship,” said Dale, who has covered the topics of masturbation, kinkiness and sexual diversity in her previous videos.

To register for the Oct. 25 presentation at Center on the Hill, visit [www.beverlydale.org](http://www.beverlydale.org)

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